

ARE THE GERMANS GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE?

Their Theologians Draw Upon the Bloody Pages of Old Testament History for Proof That They Constitute To-day's Israel

By BARTON BLAKE

THE state of exaltation characteristic of modern Germany has not been wasted upon students of contemporary thought, nor yet upon some newspaper correspondents. Certainly if the later wrongs worked by Germany against Belgium and the invaded departments of France, and in especial the deportations of civilians, recall to the Bible reader the cruelties of the Babylonian Exile, much in the mental attitude of Germany at home and abroad has seemed to some witnesses but to repeat the mentality of the ancient Hebrew nation itself, persuaded as that nation was of its status as the Chosen People: hence uniquely privileged in its dealings with the non-elect. Were not Israel's neighbors condemned by the bare fact of alienism, to an inferiority both cultural and moral—condemned, also, to such treatment by the Chosen People as was appropriate to their own inferiority? Now, if Germany could be shown to reproduce this state of mind which characterized the Jewish people of the Old Testament days, what good would it do to urge upon the German mind that Great Britain and Ireland, Belgium, Italy and, above all, France are themselves nations ranking high in the scale of civilization, nations in many ways as fully representative of Christianity and of democracy as Germany herself? All this would, in such circumstances, prove as idle as the polite protests of our American government and the government of the Netherlands against the alleged outrages on both land and sea. A thousand influences at school and university, in the state churches, during military service, in the press, etc., etc., might easily favor the development of an obsession that foreigners could fairly call a national paranoia—if our reasoning is correct.

In Defence

Friends of Germany in America—and Germany has had many friends, and invaluable friends, in our country among individuals of non-Teutonic stock—have often felt called upon to deny that Germany has suffered from any such malady of a hyper-developed nationalism, a racial auto-intoxication. At the very worst, they can cite that aphorism of old Balhisar Gracian to palliate the offences of German pride: "There is not a nation even among the most civilized that has not some fault peculiar to itself which other nations blame." Not all Germans have read Gracian, but the friends of Germany are likely to have remembered the warning of that holy book, so dear to Luther's heart,

the "Theologia Germanica," against "spiritual fulness or pride." Now, "it beginneth in this wise," wrote the fourteenth century theologian; "the Devil puffeth up the man, till he thinketh himself to have climbed the topmost pinnacle, and to have come so near to heaven that he no longer needeth Scripture, nor teaching, nor this nor that, but . . . saith or thinketh: 'Yea, now I am above all other men, and know and understand more than any one in the world; therefore it is certainly just and reasonable that I should be the lord and commander of all creatures, and that all creatures, and especially all men, should serve me and be subject to me.' . . . And of all the men who serve him and are subject to him, even if they be downright thieves and murderers, he saith nevertheless, that they have faithful, noble hearts." With such a warning spread by German theologians before all German believers, what possibility was there, or is there, of Germany becoming, as a nation, guilty of "spiritual pride"? No, so far from there being anything morbid about Germany's nationalism, the fact of which outlanders have complained is, in essence, only the health of the national idea in Germany; a vigor due in part to the youthfulness of the empire, in part to the beneficence and efficacy of the imperial government. It has been our duty to listen to such well meant protests, and to the argument that, under actual conditions, nationalism has been almost always selfish, and often malfaisant, in other lands than Germany. We have listened to these arguments.

Culled from a More Modern Book

All the same, it is a long time since Gracian's century, and longer still since the century of the "Theologia Germanica," and more characteristic, assuredly, is the book which I am about to cite and to quote—a book which confirms, in so far as a mere book can, the charge made against Germany that her statesmen and soldiers (if we can really differentiate between the Hindenburgs and Tirpitzes and Bissings and Bethmann-Hollwegs, all of whom wear uniforms and pointed helmets) do, in their plagiarisms of the cruelties of Sargon and Shalmaneser, on the one hand, and of the blood stained heroes of the books of Judah and Kings and Chronicles, on the other hand, only what the spirit of their people (however produced) tells them to do. In the face of this book and other books and pamphlets and sermons, it seems to me as futile for well wishers of Germany to go on arguing that Germany is a modern nation as it would be to argue that the plural-election system of Prussia is a modern electoral system, or that the Bundesrath represents the people of the German Empire, or that there is popular control of legislation in the empire, or that, even before the war, the press was free in Germany.

The book I refer to is written by a Mr. Dunkmann and it is entitled *Der Weltkrieg im Licht der Bibel*—"The World War in the Light of the Bible." Perhaps a few quotations will show why Germany is not yet ripe for peace.

sweetness and friendliness—a friendliness wholly immobile and contemplative.

It would be useless to bother him. The major called a young Scotchman, saying to me:

"The Scotch—they are the politest fellows in England."

At the same moment a second auto stopped and another officer got out, accompanied by a civilian. They introduced us.

"M. Benjamin, important French journalist."

"M. Persigris, distinguished Parisian, manufacturer of conserves."

We exchanged greetings without conviction, each of us being quite indifferent to the other. Then, following the young Scotchman, we entered a vast barracks where there was nothing to be seen but bags—vulgar bags piled on top of one another. And already I regretted the mysterious eyes of the Hindoo when I saw those of Persigris suddenly grow bright, and that personage, who had a pronounced stomach and breathed heavily, said in a grave tone:

"Ah! Let us see some of these."

The Scotchman was agile and easily disengaged the bags. From a pile taller than three men he disengaged a bag four times as big as himself and commenced emptying it, while the major said:

"It is the food for the Hindoos. The Hindoos—it was difficult to feed them; but to feed them well was important."

Plunging his hand into the first bag the young Scotchman drew out of it little white, powdery roots, and the dealer in conserves asked in a wheezy voice:

"What are those dirty little things?"

"Ginger roots," said the major amiably.



"ICI REPOSE UN SOLDAT ANGLAIS INCONNU. PRIEZ POUR LUI"

"During the first battle of the Aisne," writes the French artist Paul Thiriat, "many British soldiers were buried without being identified, and between the Marne and the Aisne you often come upon graves bearing the words: 'Here lies an unidentified British soldier. Pray for him.' French women often pray for the souls of these heroes. I made this sketch while the young peasant girl was praying. She did not move while I worked, and she was still praying when I walked away."

Mr. Dunkmann establishes a parallel between the conquest of the Promised Land of the Hebrews and the conquest of the "German" soil by the German peoples; "German" soil seeming to include all lands watered by such "German" rivers as the Rhine, the Meuse, the Scheldt, etc.; the mouths of these rivers; the Basin of Briey, the Baltic Provinces, etc.—i. e., the areas demanded by the Pan-Germans who would ultimately destroy the nationalities of Holland, Belgium and Denmark, while main-

ing France and other neighbors. Does not the Rhine flow through Germany as the Jordan flows through Palestine? And "if, like the Children of Israel in Egypt, our people are becoming so great and so strong that we have need of a larger territory, we will acquire this territory. . . . In all the domains of culture, of science, and of art," Mr. Dunkmann pursues, "as in those of religion and faith, Providence has multiplied heroes for us, so much so that no other nation possesses a like treasure";

captains, emperors, kings, poets, philosophers, artists—but, above all, "our heroes in the realm of religion, our learned theologians, our 'fathers' in the noblest sense of the word—it is marvelous to see with what complacency God has multiplied them among us." The religion of Russia is "not at all the true Christian faith"; English Christianity is "no more so," but "German piety is renowned for its uprightness and purity; it is the only true faith in the world." German Lutheranism

of not understanding him, the major out of politeness, I out of pity.

"And with this, what else do they put in their gizzards?"

"Look here," said the major.

"They eat she-goats."

"What an idea!"

"She-goats killed—how shall I say it? Well, killed in a certain fashion."

"So? Then all we have to do is to make them believe that we killed the she-goats that way."

Decidedly, this man who with myself represented France among the English, was getting on my nerves. I stepped away. I turned again toward the admirable Hindoo. He had squatted himself down and with some dry twigs had lighted beside his tent a clear fire, which crackled, flared and leaped aloft and which cast against the shadows of the approaching night a cheering light, a gleam of hope, a ray of poetry.

It is the hour dreaded by armies—that when the night descends upon things and men. The most hardened soldier feels an uneasiness coming over him. The heaven above him, which is the purest joy to his eyes, the heaven which sends him all that is best in his life, the clear day and its warmth—when the heaven is obscured, when it disappears, when it weighs upon each one gets restless and, even among so many comrades, suffers because he feels himself alone.

The mystery of the world, the strangeness of life, more agonizing than ever when one is in daily contact with death, assails

men at that time and tugs at their throats. Only they have that divine resource in reserve, the fire; and one sees all the opaque tents become suddenly transparent and stand out fairy-like in the sombre night.

The Hindoo, warming his hands, contemplated the little darting flames which came from his open-air fireplace like kisses thrown to him by some good genie, and his eyelids closed contentedly. Of what was he thinking—this man who loves she-goats' flesh, with pimento; rancid butter and cinnamon mixed with honey.

Is the enigma of existence not profound enough to make us tolerant of his answers to it, of his peculiar habits of reverie? And at a time when reason is certainly at a discount may it not be that there is more good sense in his rigid rules of life than in the sneers of a merchant of conserves whom the war has made rich?

The major, without saying a word, had instinctively divined all this. But in his character of an Englishman, who cares for nothing for discussion in the abstract, he replied smilingly in mere monosyllables to this great man.

After they had tramped about for a while in the mud I saw them direct their steps again toward our autos. I rejoined them. There the major, forced to it, no doubt, by banalities which had become tiresome, went as far as to say in his usual amiable manner:

"But it is their religion, is it not? We cannot understand it. But we have to respect it."

There reigned at that moment in this bit of country ravaged by the war a deadly silence. And those simple words, spoken without any pretentiousness, almost with

Providence, the Spokesmen of Their National Church Would Have Us Believe, Shuffles the Cards, but Germany Cuts Them

alone has a legitimate object—"Monotheism"—which, Mr. Dunkmann ventures to add, "distinguishes Israel from all other nations as it distinguishes us from all other peoples also."

"The Israel of Modern Humanity"

But it is Pastor Rump, preaching at Berlin, who teaches us in so many words that Germany is "the Israel of modern humanity; the inheritor of the Divine Alliance; the bearer of God's promises; the living testimony that it is not men who make history, but that it is God who makes history for men. . . . A corrupted world enslaved by monstrous sins will, according to the will of God, be healed by the German Being." Easy it is for the Rumps and Dunkmanns to derive from this convenient theory full assurance that, to the people of the New Covenant, all things are permitted to them even as to Israel of old. "The Old Testament is on our side," Mr. Dunkmann explains. "Will it be maintained that what was just for Jews is not just for Germans? . . . What the people of Israel thought it could do, neither the indignation of the neutral nations nor the hypocrisy of our neighbors will prevent us from doing in our turn." Did any nation, in modern times, ever set its clock thirty centuries back quite so openly, so vaingloriously? Did any people, through the spokesmen of its national church, so frankly turn its back upon the teachings of Christianity, preferring the bloodiest pages of Old Testament history to the chapters of promise and progress which are the Gospels? The Rumps and Dunkmanns find a clear defence for their violation of Belgian neutrality, and all that it has meant, in the fact that when the Israelites asked leave of the Amorites to pass through their lands, without turning into the fields or the vineyards or drinking at their wells, but going "along by the King's highway," until they had passed their borders, and when the Amorites refused, Israel was permitted by Jehovah to smite Sihon, the King of the Amorites, and to possess his lands "from Arnon unto Jabbok, even unto the children of Ammon" (Numbers xxi, 21-24). "That is how the Old Testament looks upon, and evaluates, neutrality." "We may say," comments Pastor Walter Lehmann, of Hamburg, "that we are acting with God. Can the Russians, the English, the French and the Serbs say so also? No, not one." And we used to think of Englishmen as hypocrites, and coined a name for their hypocrisy: "The Nonconformist conscience!"

Providence Shuffles the Cards; Germany Cuts

If, after listening to Pastor Rump and Pastor Lehmann and their friends, you still doubt that Germany is God's chosen people, perhaps you will be impressed by the testimony of another prophet: Karl Koenig by name. For Herr Doktor Koenig explains how God gave it to Germany that the war should break at an auspicious moment. (I try to write without sacrilege; if what I write sounds sacrilegious, remember that I am only paraphrasing German theologians.) War over

the Moroccan affair would have been ill-timed, since "the fleet was insufficiently developed, the Kaiser Wilhelm Canal uncompleted, and Helgoland inadequately fortified." In 1914, however, war came "two years too soon for our enemies, but a favor of God for us and our allies. For now we play the game of war with the best cards in our hands." A fit subject for modern German scriptures: Providence shuffling the cards, and Germany cutting!

Pan-German theologians prefer to derive their inspiration, their ethics, their imagery, their excuses, from the Old Testament rather than from the New Testament. To them Mr. H. G. Wells's statement, through the mouth of his Mr. Britling—the statement that "the real God of the Christians is Christ, not God Almighty; a poor, mocked and wounded God nailed on a cross, a martyr"—must seem blasphemy indeed. Theirs is, rather, what Wells calls "the Jew God the Christians took over—a Quack God." But one need not be limited in one's faith to a belief in the finite Wellsian deity to wonder how the modern German theologian of the political type, with his Wotan-Thor-Jehovah, would expound to his congregation the text: "And love thy neighbor as thyself." And yet it would be rash to assume that Germania has found it beyond her capabilities to mobilize the New Testament on the side of the Central Powers.

An Adaptation of the Lord's Prayer

"Just as Jesus was treated, the German people also has been treated," declares Pastor Franck to his flock at Liegnitz. "When we see ourselves surrounded on all sides by enemies, we also catch ourselves raising our eyes toward the Master of Heaven and Earth, who governs all the nations." Is it in prayer that Germania's eyes are raised Heavenward? Listen to Pastor Vorwerk's "adaptation" of the Lord's Prayer for war uses: "More than the scanty bread of war, multiply every day for our enemies death and grief. Forgive us in Thy merciful loving kindness every bullet and every shell that reaches not its mark. Lead us not into the temptation of too weakly accomplishing the will of God. Relieve us and our allies from the infernal enemy and from his agents on earth. Let the German Fatherland be Thy kingdom and may Thy armed hand give us strength and glory forever and ever. Amen!"

It is only fair to add that protests were made, in Germany, against this parody of the Lord's Prayer, and, especially by Catholics, against the likening of Germany to Christ. But what can be made of the national state of mind which finds expression in such reverberations? And how can it be healed? Is peace-making necessarily the duty of those who are combating these heresies, this treason against Christianity and its Founder, this denial of the spirit of brotherhood? Is it even our duty, as citizens of a still neutral republic, to side with those who cry out for a "German Peace"?

There used to be philosophers in Germany. Let theirs be the task of writing the definitive study of the furor Germanica.

When I got out of business I shall go to India.

"Oh," answered the major, "I am afraid you won't have time to see much."

"I shall stay there," answered the merchant, "as long as may be necessary—three months, six months."

"You will see nothing at all, then," said the major.

"Why?"

"It is too immense, is it not? Too incredible? In men—and also in things."

"You have been there?"

"Yes. I have been about there a good deal. But it is too big. I have not understood it very well."

"You were not there long enough?"

"Exactly."

"But how long were you there?"

The major lowered his eyes, as if he wanted to excuse himself. Then he answered:

"Twenty-three years."

The manufacturer of conserves knit his brows. Then he got into his auto without another word. The darkness became dense and depressing.

The major got into the auto with me. We were both silent. But when we were under way, jolting around in the wagon, he leaned against my friendly shoulder and said, half in a whisper:

"We haven't time—is it not so? We men haven't time to know everything—to understand everything. It generally happens that night comes too soon."

THE HINDOO COMMISSARIAT ASTONISHES A FRENCHMAN

By René Benjamin

Translated by William L. McPherson

M. René Benjamin, the laureate of the French *feuilleton*, recently made a visit to the British front in France. He has since been recording his impressions in that vivid, original and penetrating fashion which has given him his immense vogue in France as a writer of war sketches and fiction.

The sketch which follows shows M. Benjamin in his graver, semi-poetic mood. The subtle picturesqueness of the Hindoo as a soldier amid absolutely alien surroundings has appealed to him and is set forth with a sure imaginative touch, even though so prosaic a medium as a description of a visit to the base depot of a Hindoo commissariat.

FROM the depths of the auto I ventured this commonplace remark: "Ah! There's a Hindoo!"

The British officer made a sign to the driver to stop, and said:

"Let us get out."

The tall soldier from the Indies, beautiful as the first man must have been beautiful, with a silky beard, a skin tanned by the rays of an ardent sun, the brow of a dreamer, with all the ease of manner natural to persons well born—this type of a marvellous country, standing at the entrance of a tent which seemed dwarfed beside him, was nonchalantly cutting with a curved knife blade a piece of wood which had the shape of a man's throat.

Seeing the major, he neither moved nor saluted. But his look expressed a certain

an accent of tenderness, seemed to me full of profound wisdom.

We saluted one another once more. With his head still uncovered the conserve merchant said pompously:

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